



United States v. Franklin County School District; 3:68-cv-04256-HTW-LRA

The space on this page is for written objection or comment. Attach any additional pages and/or documents supporting your objection or comments to this form.

EXHIBIT B: OBJECTION OR COMMENT

For many years, I have witnessed the Franklin County School district discriminate against students, teachers, and potential employees. Racial balance has not been worked on by the Franklin County School district. Many students, teachers, and people of the community who are black fear what can happen to them if they speak up. I have outlined some instances on the attached pages.

Date(s) of incident(s) described above: 2006 to current

Printed Name Sondra Mason

Signature Sondra Mason

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Check as appropriate:

My race is: ☒ African-American; ☐ Caucasian; ☐ Other

- ☒ I have children who now attend the Franklin County School District
☒ I have children who attended the Franklin County School District in the past.
☒ I am a current employee of the Franklin County School District.
☐ I am not currently employed by Franklin County School District but I have been employed there in the past.
☐ I have applied for employment with the Franklin County School District but have never been employed by the District.

I, Sondra Mason, wish to make an objection to Franklin County School District's motion for declaration of unitary status. I do not wish to appear before the court because I work for the school system as a teacher and like most blacks in Franklin County I fear retaliation in the making my statements known.

If the Franklin County School District was doing what it is supposed to, there would be no reason to file a motion for unitary status. I am a black female and I was introduced to the Franklin County Schools in 2006 when I transferred my children to the Franklin County School District. Immediately, I saw many instances where teachers and administrators did not comply with desegregation orders.

For years, I have seen the following incidents take place:

- 2005 – We transferred my child from New Hope Christian School, a private school in Jackson, MS to Franklin County School District. My daughter, a black female, was at the top of her class and we wanted to continue to challenge her academically. Upon enrolling her for school in the Franklin County School District, we asked about placement for the gifted program. We were told that my daughter could not be a part of the gifted program. I was told by the teacher that the classes were too full to allow any more students into the gifted program when we first moved to Franklin County Schools. I had to challenge the request to have my child placed into the gifted program. My daughter was finally allowed to test and I was told by the person administering the test that she had seen. Since then, I have witnessed white children not having to be tested and able to walk into the program only because of who they know or who they are related to.
- 2006 - A black female student was told at the last minute that she would not graduate as valedictorian of her class even though she had held the highest average up until the last day. The black female ended up graduating salutatorian for the class of 2006. When I started work as a certified teacher in 2012, the trophy that should have been presented to the salutatorian for the Class of 2006 was found in the trash. When I asked the counselor about the trophy, I was told that she was cleaning out the closet and that she did not know how to get in contact with the black female to present the trophy to her, although she had sibling in the school system and her father is a local minister who visits the school.
- A white math teacher was fired in 2009. When I got news of this vacancy, I contacted the principal and offered to help out since I have a B.S. in Mathematics as well as a B.S. in Computer Science. I was told that I could not help out because I was not certified. However, I was told later by my daughter that a non-certified teacher had been hired to sub in that class for the remainder of the school year. This was a white male who had ties with Franklin County and had been promised a job as the history teacher, a position that was to become vacant because a black teacher was retiring, once he could become certified. The white male teacher later got the job of History teacher over a black male who had been certified and teaching history for years in Florida.

- In 2010, I became an assistant for the after school program helping students with math. The afterschool program is a tutoring program for students who are struggling with their classes and even though the program is offered to whites, whites do not enroll because the program is administered by an African American. During this time, I decided that I needed to become a certified teacher in order to help make a difference in the lives of our future generations.
- A black male held the position of ISS teacher. He was certified in counseling and applied for an opening for counselor but was denied the job because they hired a white female that was an elementary teacher who had ties in Franklin County and had just gotten certified.
- In 2011, I was hired as a math tutor. Part of my job was to work with students who were having problems with mathematics. I spent part of my day in the school's Alternative School where I came in contact with many black students that they had put there as a means of discipline. I worked with one black male and could not understand why I was tutoring him because he knew the information that I was going over with him. I decided to ask this student why he could not do this in the classroom and he told me that he knew "that the teachers did not want him in the class room and felt teachers did not want him to succeed because he was black".
- A junior high white male student wrote the word "Nigger" on the sidewalk and there was no discipline given by the administrator that we know of. However, a black male student was sent to ISS for saying "M....F..." to another student.
- 2013, Beta club trip was taken to Tupelo, MS. There were approximately 35 black students that attended this trip but there were no black teachers, parents or staff on the trip. During the trip, I received a call from my daughter and her friends that they had all of the blacks in the hall because they smelled smoke. The white advisor made two black girls sit out in the hall while they searched their room. The smoke was coming from an area located below the girls room. No hotel or security personnel were involved in the search.
- As years passed, I have found that there is no real help for black students whom they have labeled as troubled black students. In 2016, I was given a black female student whom they had deemed a problem. When looking at her schedule, I realized that she had not been given an English class. After talking to the principal, I was told that she they did not want her in the English class, which is taught by a white teacher, because she would cause too much trouble. However, because she was a black student and I am black that I could handle her. Once she proved herself, she would be given an English class.
- Assistance is given to white family members and friends who they want to get certified or work in the school system. When I started there was no assistance provided.

In 2013, when I was doing my intern and first year of teaching, I was not given mentor from the school. However, from listening to other conversations while in the teacher's lounge, I have found out that mentors and assistance is given to new white teachers in the Franklin County School District.

In 2013, when I was assigned to Geometry, I went to the white teacher who was retiring and asked her for the teaching material that she had for the class. She told me that she did not have any of the material. At the beginning of the next school year, I found the teacher manual hidden in the book room and all other teacher material had been thrown away.

- A black female teacher that was teaching Chemistry was told that she needed to become certified in Physics in order to hold her position as a Chemistry teacher. Despite several attempts she was unable to pass the Physics test to become certified in that area. The black teacher was assigned to teach lower science classes (Earth Science and Physical Science). The next school year the Chemistry class was taught by a retired white male for half of the year. In January of that school year, a non-certified white male was put in the class as a sub for the rest of the school year. In 2013, a white female was hired as the teacher for the Chemistry classes. She was teaching in a neighboring school district and had ties to people in the Franklin County School District. This teacher did not have a Physics certification. When I asked her about not having her Physics certification, she stated that the principal was allowing her to teach Chemistry for one year and that she was given "an extra planning period to work on getting certified in Physics". This teacher made several attempts to pass the Physics certification without success according to Mississippi pass rate. The teacher was advised by administration to get her certification in another state and then have it transferred to Mississippi. The white teacher gave her letter of intent to take a year off to work on her administration certification for the 2017-18 school year and position automatically offered to a white male teacher who only have Chemistry certification.
During this hiring process of the white female teacher, there was a black male teacher who was a certified teacher in Texas who expressed concern in the Chemistry/Physics position. This black male was looking to come back to his hometown and held a certification in both Chemistry and Physics. When he contacted the principal, he was told that he had offered the position to another teacher because he did not think that he could get his certification transferred from Texas to Mississippi.
- 2014 – I was told by a white female teacher to be careful what I say around the teachers in the building because most of the teachers in the Franklin County School District were related to each other some way. She went on to explain that this was how most positions in the school district were created and/or filled. By the end of the 2014 school year, two positions had been created in the Career and Technical building for two female white teachers who were close relatives to the current superintendent. One of these positions was never advertised in-house nor publicly.

- 2014 – My daughter was given 2 days in ISS for placing her head on her hand during class. During her time in ISS, the white male teacher told my daughter that he did not know how to handle her during lunch (she usually came to my classroom and ate lunch) because he had never had a teacher's child in ISS. During this year, it was brought to my attention the unbalance of discipline given in this situation. I was told by several students that this teacher was intentionally messing with my daughter because she was a smart black female. They also brought to my attention that the white assistant principal's son slept during this class and no discipline was ever given to him.
- 2015 – The air conditioner went out in my classroom. I placed several work orders to report the problem; however, the air conditioner was never fixed. Getting the air fixed became a daily topic in my classroom. One day a white male student said that he believed they were not fixing the air conditioner in my room because I was black. He had witness a white female teacher have problems with her air conditioner and within 3 hours her problem had been looked at and fixed. I told the student that he should mention this to the maintenance man as well as his parents because the air not being fixed in my room was affecting them more than me because I had a fan pointing directly on me. At this point, the air finally got fixed in my room.
- 2016 – I witnessed an effort to change grades of the two highest black student's grades of the graduating class. One of these students was my daughter. The beginning of the year, my daughter experienced problems with the white Chemistry teacher changing her grades. The teacher had given test papers back to review. She asked that the students make changes to their paper. However, when reviewing my daughter had questions about several of the questions that had been marked wrong on her paper. The teacher did not like the fact that my daughter was challenging her. Later in the week, I was called to the office to meet with the principal and the Chemistry teacher. I was told by the Chemistry teacher that my daughter's grade of a 79 would be changed to a zero. At this point, I asked the principal what were my daughter's options at this point. My daughter had a 4.0 at this point in her senior year and this was an effort to get her grades down by having a lower grade in this class. I had her removed from the class and enrolled her in a class online in order for her to complete and receive the credit that she needed in order to be a Mississippi Scholar. She completed the Chemistry class online on her own and received an "A". Another attempt was made to lower my daughter's GPA, at the end of third nine weeks the annual staff teacher, a white female, gave my daughter a "B" for annual staff. My daughter had been on the annual staff for three years and had always received "A"s in this class. When I asked the teacher if my daughter had not done her work and if anything had changed, she told me that my daughter had done everything as she should have. Even though Annual staff is an elective it receives the same grade weight as an English class. So lowering her grade in this class would affect her GPA. This same teacher was the teacher who entered the grades for soccer and she also put a "0" in the grade book for my daughter and a black male who was ranked 2nd in this class for the fourth nine weeks before the nine weeks had taken place yet. When I talked with

her about this, the teacher claimed that she had tried and could not change the grade. We were able to finally get the grade changed after I threatened to go to the school board concerning this. The other student ended up graduation salutatorian and my daughter ended up 3rd in the class.

- Throughout the years, I learned that many white people are groomed for many positions at Franklin County Schools. In 2016, several administrative positions opened but white teachers were already offered the positions without an interview process and before getting certified as administrators. The positions were advertised but the positions were already filled before the interview process began. When asked about hiring a black administrator, a black secretary was told by a white administrator that they only had to interview a black person for the position not hire the black administrator. In this case, a white female was brought out of retirement to serve as Principal and a white female who had just gotten certified as an administrator was chosen to serve as Assistant Principal. I do know for a fact that there were at least one black female who was qualified and certified as an administrator.
- I was talking to a black female English teacher. She informed me that she was discriminated against years before when he had been talking to the high school principal about an English position that was becoming vacant at the high school. She had the certification to teach the class but the job was given to a white female who did not have a current certification to teach high school. When I asked this teacher why she did not report this case, she told me that she needed her job and was afraid of the consequences.
- During the 2015-16 school year, the art teacher who was a white female announced that she was retiring and that her replacement would be a white female who was currently serving as the 8th grade math teacher. This white female math teacher was working to become certified in art. In the meantime, a black male called to express an interest in the position since he was already certified, a native of Franklin County, and currently working in a neighboring school district. He was told there was no position open and given the run around because they has already promised a white female teacher the position. The position was not advertised until this current math teacher became certified in art.
- I have witness too many black students get punished while white students receive a tap on the wrist. Many black students have served time in ISS but their names were never put on the attendance records because administrators had been told that they were disciplining too many black students. To work around this, administrators only reported a few of the black students who were placed in ISS. This work around allowed administrators at the high school to only have fewer black students listed as being disciplined.

- I also had a white male student who would skip my class on a regular basis. The rules state that they are to be punished for this but this student did not. When I brought it up to administration he did get one day in ISS. This student finally stopped coming to my classroom. He ended up flunking but was still allowed to advance to the next class.
- 6th grade black male student suspended for 365 for supposedly having alcohol mixed in his drink. This black male was not allowed to make up any work causing him to flunk for the year. But a white male student brings e-cigarette and tobacco on the elementary campus and was only suspended for 10 days for having contraband on campus and placed in ISS for the rest of school year. He was also allowed to make up all work.
- 2016 – A public meeting was held at the local church in Franklin County with the Justice Department. Teachers at the elementary schools were told that someone would be there to see who attended and there would be consequences. On the day that the Justice Department was visiting Franklin County Schools, the schools were dismissed early because of “bad weather”. This “bad weather never occurred but the Justice Department was forced to leave and not finish their investigation because schools had been dismissed.
- U. S. History classroom has pictures of past presidents on the wall with the exception of President Obama who was in his second term of office at this time. Several students inquired to the white male teacher about not having the President Obama on the wall and were told that he could not find any pictures of President Obama.
- 2016 – A white female teacher was promoted to Assistant Principal causing the high school to have a vacant math position. In June, I was told that I would have to teach the beginning math course because the other white female teacher only had a year left before she retired and she could not handle a “Common Core” based class. I was told that this was only supposed to be for one school year because veteran teachers are always given the option of which class that wanted to teach and the new hire would have to take what’s left. Fast-forward to the end of 2017 school year, before signing my contract, I ask the principal about what class I would be teaching and he kept giving me the run around. I was finally told that I had to teach the beginning math course again because he did not know much about this new white female teacher he had hired. Which seems strange since her experience should be on her resume’.

In the Franklin County School District, it is obvious that whites and blacks are not treated equally. Above are a few instances that I have witnessed since enrolling my children and becoming a teacher for the Franklin County School District. However, there are many more. Many teachers, assistant teachers, students and community members are afraid to speak up for fear of retaliation. It is still a shame that racism is still alive and well in Mississippi; especially in Franklin County School District. If Franklin County Schools are taken from under the order

things will only get worse for minorities attending and working for the Franklin County School District.

Franklin County Schools

2016 – 2017 School Year

The following information was pulled from Franklin County School website and school annuals.

High School (9th – 12th)

0 of 6 administration black

7 out of 32 certified/licensed teachers are black

1 of 1 support staff black (janitor)

Middle School (7th – 8th)

1 of 3 administration black (secretary)

2 of 19 certified/licensed teachers are black

1 of 1 support staff black (janitor)

Upper Elementary (4th – 6th)

1 of 4 administration black (secretary)

6 of 15 certified/licensed teachers are black

6 of 19 support staff are black

Lower Elementary (pre-K – 3rd)

1 of 3 administration black (secretary)

6 of 23 certified/licensed teachers are black

Unable to get numbers for support staff

Central Office

3 of 9 staff are black

Special Services

1 of 2 administration black (director)

The cafeteria and maintenance staffs are not represented because that listing could not be found.